

**Amendments to the claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1 – 11 (Canceled).

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A method for facilitating supply chain processes in an outsourced manufacturing environment, said manufacturing environment including an original equipment manufacturer, at least one supplier and at least one contract manufacturer, comprising:

selecting a preferred price protection plan from a list of plan choices in response to analysis and award of a contract manufacturing bid resulting in an agreement;

executing an outsourced supply chain tool for implementing said plan, comprising:

placing a purchase order with a contract manufacturing entity in accordance with said agreement via said outsourced supply chain tool;

filtering out parts listed on said purchase order flagged for special execution as directed by said preferred price protection plan;

placing a second purchase order for flagged parts with a supplier designated by said original equipment manufacturer, said second purchase order containing instructions for providing said flagged parts to said contract manufacturer;

coordinating delivery and payment transactions for said flagged parts;

coordinating delivery and payment transactions for finished products;

monitoring associated activities of said original equipment manufacturer, said at least one contract manufacturer, and said at least one supplier; and

resolving issues relating to said associated activities.

Claim 13. (Withdrawn) A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for facilitating supply chain processes in an outsourced manufacturing

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environment, said manufacturing environment including an original equipment manufacturer, at least one contract manufacturer, and at least one supplier, the storage medium including instructions for causing a computer to implement a method, comprising:

selecting a preferred price protection plan from a list of plan choices in response to analysis and award of a contract manufacturing bid resulting in an agreement;

executing an outsourced supply chain tool for implementing said plan, comprising:

placing a purchase order with a contract manufacturing entity in accordance with said agreement via said outsourced supply chain tool;

filtering out parts listed on said purchase order flagged for special execution as directed by said preferred price protection plan;

placing a second purchase order for flagged parts with a supplier designated by said original equipment manufacturer, said second purchase order containing instructions for providing said flagged parts to said contract manufacturer;

coordinating delivery and payment transactions for said flagged parts;

coordinating delivery and payment transactions for finished products;

monitoring associated activities of said original equipment manufacturer, said at least one contract manufacturer, and said at least one supplier; and

resolving issues relating to said associated activities.

Claim 14. (Currently amended) A system for facilitating supply chain processes in an outsourced manufacturing environment, comprising:

a manufacturing entity comprising:

a server;

an outsourced supply chain tool executing on said server;

a terminal in communication with said server via a communications link;

a data storage device in communication with said server via said

communications link;

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a network link to at least one contract manufacturer system;  
a network link to a customer focus team system assigned to the contract manufacturer system based upon geographic proximity, said customer focus team system performing logistical administrative services for said at least one-contract manufacturing system on behalf of said manufacturing entity;  
wherein said logistical administrative services include at least one of:  
facilitating transfer and replenishment of components needed during manufacture;  
ensuring ongoing inventory demand issues are addressed and resolved;  
obtaining and providing metrics on outsourced supply chain parts and activities;  
assisting said at least one-contract manufacturing system during shortfalls of supplies;  
collaborating with said commodity team council systems relating to acquisition of critical parts; and  
providing assistance on matters related to import, export, and tax issues.

Claim 15. (Currently amended) The system of claim 14, further comprising:

a network link to at least one supplier system; and  
a network link to at least one commodity council team system assigned to the supplier system based upon geographic proximity, said commodity council team providing logistical administrative support to said supplier system;  
wherein said logistical administrative support includes at least one of:  
ensuring timely placement of purchase orders relating to supporting supplier systems;  
managing order books of said supporting supplier systems;  
providing outsourced supply chain metrics relating to supply chain activities;

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escalating shortfalls identified for inventories of said supplier systems; assisting said customer focus team systems in acquiring critical parts; facilitating replenishment implementation and drive to complete drop shipment functions; resolving finance issues; visiting said supplier systems; providing support for other outsourced supply chain regions on unique supplier issues; providing input on supplier report cards; and interfacing with council chairs on contract issues, geographical allocations, supplier credits, and letters to suppliers on transfers.

16. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15, wherein said outsourced supply chain tool performs:

generating a price protection plan for ~~at least one of said at least one contract manufacturer and said at least one supplier~~, said generating a price protection plan performed by gathering data relating to goods to be manufactured, said data including:

forecast and demand data;  
supplier commitment data;  
contract manufacturer award data; and  
logistical data;

developing business rules operable for identifying cost savings in accordance with existing negotiated contract pricing and contract terms and conditions of trading partner agreements;

executing supply chain activities utilizing results of said generating a price protection plan and said developing business rules.

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17. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15, wherein commodity team council systems are created for each commodity associated with said ~~at least one~~ supplier.

18. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, further comprising an exception approval form created by said outsourced supply chain tool, said exception approval form operable for requesting exceptions to business rules and price protection plans adopted by said manufacturing entity.

19. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, further comprising a decentralized file database in communication with said server, said decentralized file database operable for directing a contract manufacturer system to generate purchase orders and is accomplished by:

extracting data relating to products and assemblies manufactured by contract manufacturer systems, said data including:

part numbers;

supplier split percentages; and

pricing;

segregating extracted data for each of said contract manufacturer systems; and transmitting said extracted data to each of said contract manufacturer systems.

20. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15, wherein said supply chain tool further performs implementing a set of business rules operable for directing ~~at least one of~~ said ~~at least one~~ contract manufacturer system and said ~~at least one~~ supplier system to perform an activity, said activity including:

directly procuring parts pursuant to a bid award;

executing a purchase order for directly procured parts; and

executing invoice and payment procedures for said directly procured parts.